

OBITUARY: WILLIAM ANTHONY MAKEPEACE B.Sc. (Hons.),
Ph.D., 1950-1983.

I have been putting off writing this obituary for a long time now; each time I have picked up my pen to write I have not had the courage to start. This time I have more resolve and perhaps in the penning of these lines I will at last lay Bill's ghost.

William Anthony Makepeace, Bill to his friends, was born on February 11, 1950 in San Francisco. He attended High School there and for one year the University of the State of California. At the university his life-long interest in music culminated in his becoming bass guitarist in the "Purple Virus" rock band, a band so successful that it once held a concert in California's second biggest stadium. Incongruously perhaps in view of his love of heavy rock music, Bill received an award for Best Dressed Man on Campus.

When he was nineteen, Bill's parents shifted to Christchurch. After a battle with university authorities regarding his American qualifications, he enrolled at the University of Canterbury. Although his interests were primarily botanical and he gained his B.Sc. (Hons.) in Botany, Bill was a convivial fellow with a broad love of nature. It was inevitable therefore that he would join the Biological Society. It was during Biological Society activities that we met and became firm friends. Bill served as President, and then as Secretary of Biosoc. During Biosoc field trips we discovered each others love of photography and together explored the realms of colour photography. It was always Bill who was the innovator however, and always Bill who completely understood the technical aspects of what we were doing. Our activities culminated in a small colour printing and wedding photography business and in my case I managed to keep body and soul together through the income this generated.

We flatted together as we started our respective doctorate research, but it was understood that when my flatmate returned Bill would set up shop elsewhere. He did so in the warren flats at Kirkwood Avenue.

Tragically his mother died of lung cancer, a year or so after his move, and Bill had to face the agonising decision of staying on his own or moving back with his father. Wisely he opted for independence, supported to a large degree by the love and affection of Jan Mountfort and her two daughters, Kate and Michele. They became his surrogate family and gave him the emotional support he needed during this difficult time.

Running helped also as Bill was an enthusiastic member of the University Cross Country and Athletic Clubs. He became titular head of a small group of runners with mediocre ability, - "the Makepeace Mugs" as we became known. We ran for enjoyment and in retrospect I now treasure some of the argumentive lunch time runs around Hagley Park.

OBITUARY

After completing his Ph.D. dissertation on "Hieracium pilosella and H. praealtum" Bill moved to Hamilton where he started work at Ruakura Research Station. Not a person to make friends easily or quickly, this was a lonely period for him until he met Lyn Miller. Just when things appeared to be going well, Bill's father died of a stroke, leaving him with no living relative in New Zealand. In his logical, philosophical manner, he came to grips with his new situation and gradually optimism returned to his letters. A holiday in Australia with Lyn restored him to something like the Bill of old.

In February 1983, on my way back to Fiji I stayed with Bill and Lyn in Hamilton. In two magical nights we caught up on all that we'd been unable to express in writing. On Sunday 16th February Bill drove me up to Auckland for my flight home; two days later he was killed at Ngaruawahia in a car crash. For all of us who knew and loved Bill it was the end of an era, for those lucky enough not to have known grief before, it was the end of innocence. The world lost a compassionate, caring scientist and a humane, gentle personality. He will be missed all the more for that.

To commemorate his death, Lyn Miller has inaugurated a Bill Makepeace Prize in Botany to be awarded to a student who shows promise in both work and character and is involved in the production of a project or thesis. It is the sort of award Bill would have approved of enormously and probably would have won. I would urge all of you who knew Bill to contribute annually to this fund. Donations should be sent to the Registrar, University of Canterbury.

PADDY RYAN
Suva, Fiji.